

The Historical Evidences of Jainism in Andhradesa

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Abstract

Jainism, one of the ancient Indian religious traditions emphasizing non-violence and asceticism, had a significant presence in Andhradesa, from the early centuries B.C to the medieval period. Archaeological, epigraphical, and literary evidences collectively attest to the deep-rooted influence of Jainism in the region. Early Jain relics, such as rock-cut caves at Guntupalli and Mogalrajapuram, inscriptions in the Kadamba and Satavahana periods, and sculptural remains depicting Tirthankaras at sites like Aretippur, Danavulapadu, and Penukonda, reveal the widespread patronage Jainism received from local rulers, merchants, and communities. The Satavahanas and subsequent dynasties like the Ikshvakus and Eastern Chalukyas contributed to the flourishing of Jain art, architecture, and literature. Over time, however, Jainism's influence waned with the rise of Hindu Bhakti movements, though its ethical and philosophical legacy persisted in regional thought and culture.

Keywords: Andhradesa, inscription, Jainism, *Jaina-basadi*, *Jinalaya*,

Introduction:

Jainism in Andhradesa remains a largely unexplored subject. Evidence from Jaina relics indicates that the Jains once held a position of great respect among the Telugu people, though today they form only a small community in the region. Robert Sewell was the first to report the presence of Jaina antiquities and remains across nearly all the districts of Andhra. However, these findings have not yet been thoroughly studied, and the topic has not received the scholarly attention it truly deserves. This research paper represents an attempt to shed light on the history of Jainism in Andhra.

Regarding the entry of Jainism into in Andhra, the late Dr.P.B.Desai boldly states that Vardhamana Maha Mahavira himself sowed the seeds of his faith in Andhra. The Jaina tradition Haribhadeiya-Vritti supports the above scholar's theory. According to the Haribhadriya-Vritti, Mahavira went to Kalinga and preached Jainism there; then Mahavira left Sravasti and reached Hathasisa and Tosali where from he journeyed to Mosali. Mosali was identified with Maisolia (present Machilipatnam) of the classical writers. Further the discovery of an inscription of the Mahameghavahana, chief of Kalinga at Guntupalli in the west Godavari district says the Jaina affiliations of the caves. Dr.R.Subrahmanyam, identified the Mahameghavahana chief of the record with the king Kharavela of Kalinga, it is well known that Kharavela did to Jainism, Dr.D.C.Sircar takes the king of Guntupalli record as the king Sada of Kalinga. However, we will not be far from truth if we think that the Mahameghavahana

family, to which Kharavela as well as Sada belonged, extended its full support to Jainism. So, the Guntupalli rock-cut monasteries were originally of the Jainas. Further, it is evident from the above account that Jainism entered Andhra via, Kalinga as against the popular beliefs that it made its initial entry into Andhra from Karnataka. The discovery of the Satavahana coins in the Jain cave at Kapparaopet in Karimnagar district. Jinaprabhasuri's Kalpapradipa informs that Satavahanas were built the Jaina temples.¹

The Jaina teacher and Pontiffs was toured and propagated the Jainism among Andhra, one inscription from Konakondla in Gooty taluk of Anantapur district written in Kannada script of the 11th century A.D refers to the reign of Chalukya King Tribhuvanamallaadeva ruling from Kalyani, mentions Jaina teachers Nayakirti and Indrakirti who belonged to Kundakundanvaya. It is the most crucial epigraph for the history of Kundakundacharya, the most celebrated Jaina teacher of south India, it was P.B.Desai who first drew the attention of the scholars to this important inscription as his opinion it contained a reference to Kundakundacharya and his home town.² After the first century A.D a favorable took place in the history of Jainism, the Jaina *Sangha* was divided into the Swetambaras and Digambaras, the Jaina *Acharyas* (teachers) were began propaganda and adopted by the Jainas to win the sympathy and support of the people. The rise of the *Yapaniyas* encouraged the spread of Jainism.³ Eastern Chalukya Copper-Plate inscription⁴ from the village Peddapurappadu in Kakinada of East Godavari district is written in Sanskrit language and Telugu-Kannada script of 9th and 10th century AD records the grant of the village Kakandiparru in *Ashtami-vishaya* to a *Jinalaya* (Jain temple) on the occasion of the Jaina pontiff Kakanandacharya attaining *Dharma-pada* by Chalukya king Vishamasiddhi, son of Indra-*bhattaraka* of the Vengi country for the merit of his father and for his own self. The seal of the charter reads 'Sri Vishamasiddhi. Two Kannada inscriptions⁵ at Vendicole in Medak district, the two inscriptions on two different stones set up in the field outside the village, belonging to the Chalukya chief Irvabedemgadeva dated 1017 A.D the first one records the grant of lands at Vendikola by Bijjayarasa to Soma-*Jinalaya* (Jain temple). The second inscription, registers the grant of lands at Vendikola by Gangayyarsa to the deity Ramesavaradeva of Polparelathirtha. The gift was entrusted to the Jaina pontiff Vimala Chandra Pandita-*bhattaraka* of Soma-*Jinalaya* (Jain temple), for the merit of Somayyarsa.

From the epigraphical evidences are reflecting the Rashtrakutas were the marked zenith of Jainism in the Andhra, the Rashtrakuta rulers were staunch followers of Jainism. some of the epigraphical records are shows; The two Rashtrakuta inscriptions at Velamajala in Nalgonda district, the first one in Kannada language is engraved on a stone slab kept in front of the Pochamma temple in the village, it belongs to the Rashtrakuta king Krishna II and dated 907 A.D is in Telugu script, records the grant of 100 *mattars* of land to a Jaina-*basadi* (Jain temple or monastery) and a garden by Ravichandrayya, a subordinate of the king. Another inscription⁶ engraved on a loose pillar, found outside the same village, is in Sanskrit language and Telugu characters of about the 10th century A.D it belongs to Rashtrakuta king Krishna II, records the grant of land in the village to the Jaina-*basadi* (Jain temple or monastery) by Ravichandra son of Vikramalladeva Varmakaravayya, a resident of Velunajala. Rashtrakuta

inscription⁷ from Velamajala in Nalgonda district engraved in the Hale-Kannada script and belonging to the Rastrakuta king Krishna, the two records the gift of lands to the Jaina-*basadi* (Jain temple or monastery) made by Ravichandra, a military officer of the king. An undated epigraph⁸ at Koratla in Metpalli taluk of Karimnagar district refers the grant of some land for the worship, offerings and renovation etc., to the Jaina temple, probably by a Rashtrakuta chief.

Konakondla, Rayadurgam and Hemavati in Anantapur district, Danavulapadu in Kadapa district, Peddatumbalam in Kurnool district, Anumakonda in Warangal district and Bodhan in Nizamabad district developed as Jaina centers in Andhra. The five inscriptions from Bodhan Nizamabad district copied here, four, discovered in the ruined fort-wall, reveal that a place referred to as Bhaudhanya-nagara was a Jaina centre in the eleventh-twelfth centuries. Three inscriptions refer to the death, by *samadhi* or *sannyasana*, of the Jaina preceptors Subhanandi, Gandavimukta-bhattaraka and Chandraprabhacharya. An inscription⁹ at Pedddatumbalam in Peddakadalur Mandal of Kurnool district dated 1059 A.D mentions that, a lady Kamideviyamma, the crest jewel of Perbana-*kula*, her subordinate Karana Rudramayya built a Jinalaya (Jain temple) and named it Kamidevi Jinalaya made a grant of some land to it at the time of an eclipse on this day offerings lamp white washing repairs etc. The Western Chalukyan king Tribhuvanamalla Vikramaditya VI inscription¹⁰ at Konakondla in Anantapur district dated 1082 A.D records the construction of a Jaina Basadi, (Jain temple or monastery) by the king's subordinate, in Chitta Jinalaya at Kondakunda and endowed it with gift of land for lighting a lamp (*dipa*), food offerings (*naivedya*), etc., of the deity. The inscription¹¹ engraved on a slab set up on the Kailasappa Gutta (a hill) at Konakondla in Gooty taluk of Anantapur district dated 1081 A.D refers itself to the reign of the Chalukya king Tribhuvanamalladeva ruling from Pottalakere, for the service of the Jaina god in the *basadi* (Jain temple or monastery) called Chatta-Jinalaya (Jain temple) erected by Nalikabbe in memory of her husband in Kondakundeya-tirtha Joyimayyarasa made grant of 30 *mattars* of land, a flower garden, an oil-mill and 8 house sites. Kalyani Chalukya inscription¹² at Hemavati in Anantapur District, it is in Kannada language and characters and belongs to the reign of Tribhuvanamalla Vira-Somesvaradeva (Somesvara IV) dated 1186 A.D refers to the king's feudatory Mahamandalesvara Bhogadeva-Cholamaharaja as governing from Hencheru (modern Hemavati) and contains the eulogy of the Jaina saint Padmaprabha Maladharideva, the disciple Viranandi Siddhantachakravarti belonging to Desi-*gana*. The Pedestal Kannada inscription¹³ in Rayadurgam taluk of Anantapur district engraved on the pedestal of a Jaina image is now in private possession, dated 1375 A.D it refers to a Jaina preceptor Sri Ratnakirti Chandra Bhattaraka belonging to Sarasvati-*gachchha*, Mula-*samgha*, Balatkara-*gana* and Komdakun-*anvaya*. An undated epigraph¹⁴ from Danavulapadu in Jammalamadugu taluk of Kadapa district records the construction of the pedestal for the bathing of the image Santinatha (16th Tirthankara of Jainism) by the Rashtrakuta king Nityavarsha.

Chalukyas rulers were also indeed glorious phase in the history of Jainism in Andhra. The record of Jaina establishes was the Nadumbi-Vasadi of Vijayawada, known from the Musinikonda plates of Vishnivardhana III, it

records the grant of the village Musinikonda to the venerable Kalibhadracharya for the benefit of the Jinalaya i.e. Nadumbi-*Basadi* built by Ayyanamahadevi, queen of Kubja Vishnuvardhana. The Inscription¹⁵ at Polepalli in Mahaboobnagar district dated 1091 A.D mentions Vimaladitya, a Kalyani Chalukya king, as a patron of Jainism. Another inscription¹⁶ at Ujjili in same district dated 966 A.D in the reign of Western Chalukya king Tailapa II, registers the grant of land and flower garden to the god Chenna-Parsva by Sri Vallabha Chola Maharaja for repairs and feeding the ascetics in the temple Baddi-*jinalaya* (Jaina temple) of Darvila Sangha, Senagana and Karuru-Gaeaha inside the fort of Rajadhani Ujjivola in Kallakelegu-500. The Inscriptions¹⁷ from state Museum, Hyderabad record dated 1027 A.D registering gifts of land, an oil-mill and a flower-garden in *rajadhani* Piriya-Mosangi to a Jain-*basadi* (Jain temple or monastery) by princess Somaladevi, daughter of Jayasimha. Kalyana Chalukya King Jayasimha II inscription engraved on the four faces of the pillar kept in Bandayappa *matha* in the village Bichikunta in Kamareddi district dated 1031 A.D seems to records the construction of Kalla-*basadi* (Jain monastery) of Desiyagana and installation of the god Chandra (Prabha) there in and also grant of lands by Senabova Changayya, Palla Chattayya, Boppagorava, Devannayya, Sovappayya with all the merchant guilds viz., Nakharas and Munnurvaru as *sarvamanya*.

The Chalukyan inscription¹⁸ from Saidapuram in Nalgonda district dated 1034 A.D to the reign of Chalukyan king Jayasimha II, this stone inscription records the grant of the village Muppanappali in Kollipaka 7000 for the maintenance of two Jaina-*Basadis* (Jain temple or monastery) built by certain Aggalayya who bears the titles Vaidya-ratnakara, Pranacharyya and Naravaidya. The records describe the proficiency of Aggalayya in Ayurveda with particular reference to his skill in Sastra-*vaidya* or treatment of diseases by surgical methods. The inscription¹⁹ at Ujjali in Makthal taluk of Mahaboobnagar district dated 1097 A.D in the reign of Western Chalukya King Somesvara IV registers, the grant of land and flower garden towards the worship and offerings to the god Parsvanadha of Jaina (23rd Tirthankara of Jainism) called Baddi-*jinalaya* for its repairs and daily feeding of the visiting ascetics. Another undated epigraph²⁰ from Pudur in Mahaboobnagar district registers the grant of land and a garden to the god Parsvadeva (23rd Tirthankara of Jainism) by *Mahamandalesvara* Jattarasa of Punduru in the 12th year of the reign of Tribhuvanamalla. An epigraph²¹ from Appanapalli in Atmakur taluk of Mahaboobnagar district dated 1118 A.D, states that while Chalukya King Tribhuvanamalla Vikramaditya VI was ruling, a certain Pidiya Sankara-*setti* with the permission of Munniya Brahmesvaradeva of Kelagu-500, granted 12 *martars* of black land to the Jaina-*Basadi* (Jain temple or monastery) of Kadamburu for the daily offering of the god Parsvanadhadeva (23rd Tirthankara of Jainism).

Kannada inscription²² at Gadwal in Mahbubnagar district engraved on stone built into the adhisthana of the Yoganandisvara temple, is in Kannada language and characters of the 11th-12th centuries AD. It states that Padmananda-maladhari made a gift to a Jaina temple named Tirtha-*basadi* built by Parisva-*Bhattaraka* belonging to Mula-*sangha*, Kondakumdanvaya, Desiyagana and Postaka-*gachcha*. The Bairanipalli inscription²³ in Jangaon taluk of Warangal district dated 1108 A.D registers the installation of the Jaina image and the grant of a mango

garden, 20 *mattars* of *karamba* land and other lands for the repairs of the temple and feeding of the ascetics by Biramaraddi the *dandanayaka* of the capital Bhuvanagiri and the two *karanams* of Bekkallu. According to Indrapalanagar record²⁴ in Nalgonda district, it is in Kannada language and Kannada characters of tenth century, engraved on a stray pillar attached to another, erected as a door-post at the gate of a deserted temple at the foot of the hill, records the grant of lands to Jayadhira-*jinalaya* by Mahasamantadhipati Sankara-*gandarasa* endowed with the epithets Jayadhira, *abimana-dhavala*, *Rattara-meru*, etc. Kalyana Chalukya inscription²⁵ at Mallam in Karimnagar district is found on a loose slab in the village, belongs to the Kalyana Chalukya king Bhulokamalla (Somesvara III) dated 1124 A.D records the grant of some land to the god Parsvanatha for the worship, offerings and also repairs, etc. at Gangapura by Bammisetti of Mannakere.

The inscription²⁶ edited below unearthed, when the villagers constructed the culvert of a tank which is in between Jadcherla and Bedepalli in Mahaboobnagar district dated 1125 A.D, the benedictory verse is in praise of the doctrine of Lord Jaina, the inscription informs us that when the Prince Tailapa was ruling over *Kandu-nadu*, a certain merchant Bammi-*setti* of the Virabalanjiga community have constructed a *chaitya* (jaina monastery) the deity of which is Parsvanatha, (23rd teacher or *tirthankara*) at Gangapura, after washing the feet of Meghachandra Siddhantadeva. It is further stated that the merchant guild, for the maintenance of this *basadi* or *chaityalaya* endowed it with certain levies collected from each shop and business transaction, additional grants in the form of grain, ginger, oil and betel leaves etc., are said to have been made by Bammisetti himself, merchants and other residents of Gangapura as well as inhabitants of the neighboring villages. A record²⁷ engraved on a slab lying in the middle of the village at Bhogapuram in Bhimilipatnam dated 1178 A.D speaks that the construction of Rajaraja-*Jinalaya* (Jaina temple) in Bhogapuram *alias* Vikramagangavirapenta and grant of land to the said temple by Kannama-Nayaka.

Velanati chiefs were also great patrons of Jainism in Andhra. Jaina Pillar inscription²⁸ at Munugodu in Guntur district, it is in Telugu characters of early 12th century A.D on a granite pillar, records renovation of a temple dedicated to Sitalanatha (Sitajinesvara) by one Gaichamaboya Kattadu, a subordinate of the Velanati chief Gonka. It also records the donation of land to the said temple in the vicinity duly demarcating its boundaries, by Mahamandalesvara Velanati Gonka in the thirty-seventh regional year of Vishnuvardhana II corresponding to 1107 A.D. The inscription further refers to the existence of a Jaina-*Basadi*, known as Prithvtilakamu Anandaraja Chitta Samtoshamu and ends with imprecatory statement.

The early Kakatiyas patronized the Jainism, Pergada Beta, the minister of the Kakatiya Prola-II and his wife Mailama were Jainas and they were known to have built the Kadalalaya-*basadi* at Hanumakonda and Kakatiya Prataparudradeva was a disciple of the Jaina teacher Pyshpasena, during the Kakatiya times Hanumakonda became a great Jaina centre.²⁹ An inscription³⁰ from Hanumakonda in Warangal district dated 1117 A.D refers, the construction of the Kadalalaya-*basadi* (Jaina monastery) on the top of the hill by Mailama the wife of Beta, the minister of Kakatiya Prola and the grant of 2 *mattars* of wet land below the bund of the tank built by

her husband Betana-*pergade* and 2 *martars* of the black soil on the west of the tank and 6 *martars* of uncultivated land for the daily worship, incense, lights and oblations in the temple. It also records a subsidiary grant by *Mahamandalesvara* Medarasa of Ugravadi, who was born in the family of Madhavavarman of 1 *mattar* of wet land at the head of the canal tank of Orugallu included within his fief and 10 *mattars* of other land in the same place. Above said evidences are reflecting the patronize of the Jainism in Andhra by the rulers.

Conclusion

To conclude, it is true that the Andhra rulers of the records have extended their unremitting zeal and exemplary devotion towards Jainism also. The historical evidences of Jainism in Andhradesa reveal that the religion once played a vibrant and influential role in shaping the spiritual and cultural landscape of the region. From the early centuries BC through the medieval period the sources were collectively demonstrate the widespread acceptance and royal patronage Jainism enjoyed under dynasties such as the Satavahanas, Ikshvakus, and Eastern Chalukyas. Jain monks and scholars contributed significantly to the propagation of ethical ideals, education, and literary development, while the art and architecture of the period reflected distinct Jain iconography and symbolism. However, with the gradual rise of Brahmanical traditions and the Bhakti movement, Jainism's prominence in Andhradesa began to decline, though its philosophical influence endured in the moral and cultural fabric of the region. The surviving monuments, inscriptions, and artistic remains continue to testify to the once-flourishing Jain heritage of Andhra Pradesh. Thus, the study of these evidences not only enhances our understanding of the historical evolution of Jainism but also underscores the pluralistic and tolerant nature of religious development in Andhra.

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